

Lewis County Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan

Prepared by: Lewis County Department of Economic Development and
Planning and the Lewis County Transportation Task Force

Date: January 2009

Executive Summary

The Lewis County Transportation Task Force has prepared the following plan to provide documentation of past and current efforts toward the creation of a public transit-human services transportation coordinated plan, and to provide the outline for future efforts to improve community mobility and quality of life for the residents of Lewis County. This Lewis County Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan, hereafter referred to as the Plan, is specifically prepared in accordance with the regulations of the Federal Transportation, Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) mandate.

SAFETEA-LU requires the establishment of a “locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan” for all FTA programs for underserved populations: the Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities program (Section 5310); the Job Access and Reverse Commute program (Section 5316); and the New Freedom program (section 5317).

Introduction

Problem Statement

Lewis County is a rural county where low-income individuals without vehicles have difficulty accessing healthcare, human services programs, and retail stores to purchase essential goods and services. Additionally, low-income residents, without adequate transportation, are finding it difficult to obtain and maintain gainful employment and attend adult education programs.

Lewis County agencies have historically provided transportation to low-income, disabled and/or senior individuals through various county and state mandated programs. Research has shown that there are significant redundancies in the existing delivery of transportation services and there is a need to provide for a more efficient transportation system.

Purpose of the Lewis County Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan

In May 1999, the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) announced the Rural Transportation Initiative. The initiative was designed to ensure that rural areas and small communities share in the mobility and economic, and social benefits that many USDOT programs provide. It aims to increase the capacity of rural America to play a more integral role in the planning and decision-making that shape transportation systems. It also provides an array of technical assistance and grant programs to enable communities to plan, develop and improve air, surface, and water transportation infrastructure.

The objectives of the Rural Transportation Initiative are:

- To improve safety by reducing the human and material costs that are unintended consequences of the operation of the transportation systems in rural areas;
- Allow residents of rural areas and small communities access to the destinations and goods to attain their desired quality of life;
- Provide the transportation service that will afford rural areas and small communities the opportunity to reach their economic growth and trade potential;
- Enhance the social strength and cohesiveness of small communities and protect the natural environment of rural areas;
- Maintain the national security and border integrity necessary for the well being of all Americans.

In February 2004, the Presidential Executive Order 13330 on the Coordination of Human Services Programs created an Interagency Transportation Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility to undertake departmental actions to minimize duplication among federally-funded human service transportation services, simplify customer access to transportation services, enhance cost effectiveness of service delivery and identify useful practices in coordinating human service transportation.

The Plan is a necessary requirement should the county seek funding through the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) programs, including Section 5310 – Elderly and Individuals with Disabilities, Section 5316 – Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) and Section 5317 – New Freedom.

The purpose of the Lewis County Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan is to identify methods to improve transportation services for persons with disabilities, senior citizens and low-income individuals. The plan will assist in the coordination between and among transit providers and human service agencies.

The plan recommends strategies and identifies implementation priorities to improve the coordination of public transit and human service transportation in Lewis County.

Federal Transit Administration Funding Sources

Section 5310 – Elderly and Individuals with Disabilities Program

The Elderly and Individuals with Disabilities Program provides funding to assist private nonprofit groups in meeting the transportation needs of the elderly and persons with disabilities when the transportation service provided is unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate to meeting these needs. These funds are apportioned to the states annually by a formula that is based on the number of elderly persons and persons with disabilities in each state. The New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) administers this program in New York State and an interagency review committee selects grantees. Capital assistance in New York State under this program is provided on an 80% Federal / 20% local share basis for the purchase of vehicles. Private, nonprofit agencies are eligible to receive funding and must demonstrate that they coordinate services for elderly persons and persons with disabilities.

Section 5316 – Job Access Reverse Commute Program

The goal of the Job Access and Reverse Commute program (JARC) is to improve access to transportation services to employment and employment-related activities for welfare recipients and eligible low-income individuals and to transport residents of urbanized areas and non-urbanized areas to suburban employment opportunities. Toward this goal, the FTA provides financial assistance for transportation services planned, designed, and carried out to meet the transportation needs of eligible low-income individuals, and of reverse commuters regardless of income.

In New York State, NYSDOT administers the JARC program. Funds can be used for capital and operating costs of equipment and facilities that relate to providing access to jobs, promoting transit for workers with non-traditional work schedules, use of transit vouchers and use of employer-provided transportation.

Section 5317 – New Freedom Program

The purpose of the New Freedom Program is for public or alternative transportation services and facility improvements to address the needs of persons with disabilities.

Funds cover capital and operating costs to expand services beyond those that are required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Eligible activities under this program include, but are not limited to: purchasing vehicles and supporting accessible taxi, ridesharing and vanpooling programs; providing paratransit services beyond minimum requirements; supporting accessibility improvements to transit and intermodal stations; and supporting voucher programs for transportation offered by human service providers.

Mission and Vision Statements

Mission: To identify the existing transportation services, duplications in service, gaps in existing services and future transportation needs in Lewis County. This study will aid in the development of a responsible, consumer-focused Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan for Lewis County.

Vision: Through the development and implementation of the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan, the transportation-disadvantaged of Lewis County will have greater access to health care, human services, employment, education, commerce, social and community services.

Lewis County Transportation History

In 2004, representatives from five county human service agencies introduced a plan to consolidate human service transportation, in which the county would contract county transportation for the Department of Social Services (DSS), Lewis County Community Mental Health Clinic (CMHC), Lewis County Public Health Agency (PHA), Lewis County General Hospital Adult Day Health Care (ADHC), and the Office for the Aging (OFA) out to a transit vendor. Unfortunately, the necessary support was not available at the time and the planning to consolidate the administration of the transportation services provided by these agencies ceased.

In 2007, the Lewis County Transportation Task Force, a group of human service providers, began meeting to discuss the transportation needs within the county. The major concern at the time was the transportation of dialysis clients for treatment. As more people came to the table, transportation efficiency became a subject of interest.

The Lewis County Transportation Task Force invited the Lewis County Manager to a meeting in April 2008 to discuss transportation efficiency and needs. The County Manager, understanding the importance of transportation efficiency, asked the Lewis County Department of Economic Development and Planning to review the existing transportation programs in the county and identify the redundancies and gaps in service. The Lewis County Department of Economic Development and Planning now has a seat at the Transportation Task Force table and is coordinating the efforts of the Transportation Task Force.

RESEARCH

Regional Geography and Demographics

It is essential to define the geography and demographics of Lewis County in order to understand the relationship they have with the transportation needs of the county. The Lewis County Transportation Task Force must consider geography, population centers and trends, socio-economic status, educational status, employment and vehicle ownership when planning, implementing and evaluating the Lewis County Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan.

Geography

Lewis County is centrally located in the northern section of New York State, north of Utica-Rome and east of Lake Ontario and Watertown. The county lies between the Tug Hill Plateau to the west, the Adirondack foothills to the east and the Black River Valley running north and south through the center. It is bordered by Jefferson County, St. Lawrence County, Herkimer County, Oneida County and Oswego County. The county seat, Lowville, is located 120 miles west/northwest of Albany, 90 miles northeast of Syracuse and 55 miles north of Utica-Rome.

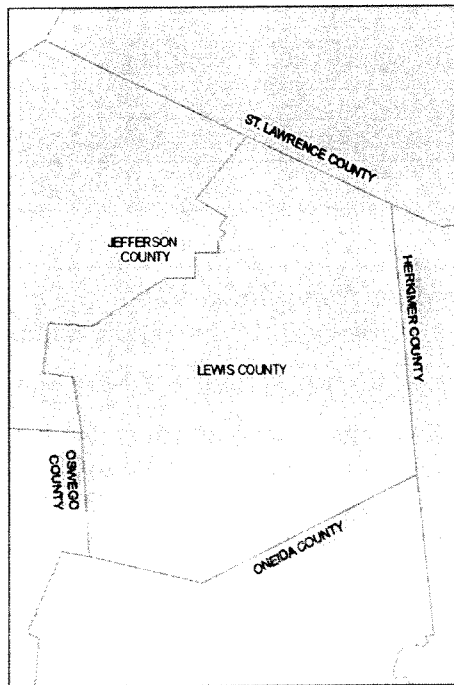


Figure 1. Lewis County and Surrounding Counties

Population

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey Demographic and Housing Estimates for 2005-2007, the estimated population of Lewis County is 26,374. This is a slight decrease from the reported 2000 Census data of 26,944. According to the 2000 Census, the population density is 21 persons per square mile and Lewis County is the fourth least populated county in New York State. In fact, the County is one of only two in the state classified as "rural" by the federal government.

Lewis County is comprised of 17 towns and 9 villages. The majority of the county's population is located along the Black River Valley. The Village of Lowville is the population center, and in 2000, had a population of 3,476. Table 1 shows that the population trend of Lewis County is beginning to decline.

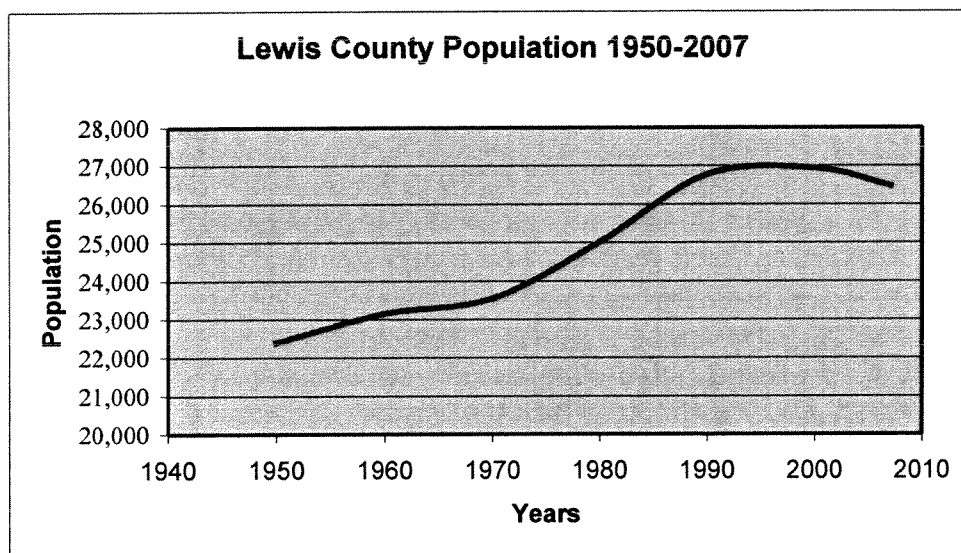


Table 1. Lewis County Total Population from 1950 to 2007.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Lewis County Community Economic Development Strategy

The American Community Survey showed the median age of Lewis County to be 38.6 years. The trends show a significant increase in the median age from 1990 to the present, as well as a large increase in the population 65 or over during the same period. Table 2 details the percentage of the population by age group.

AGE GROUP	1990	% OF TOTAL	2000	% OF TOTAL	2007	% OF TOTAL
0-17	8,161	30.4	8,206	30.4	6,246	23.7
18-24	2,374	8.9	1,366	5.1	2,444	9.3
25-44	8,133	30.4	7,588	28.2	6,807	25.8
45-64	4,894	18.3	6,074	22.5	7,044	26.7
65 +	3,234	12.0	3,710	13.8	3,833	14.5
TOTAL	26,796	100.0	26,944	100.0	26,374	100.0

Table 2. Comparison of Lewis County population by age group over 17-year period.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The county is sparsely populated in the Tug Hill and Adirondack Foothills regions of the county and more densely populated in the Black River Valley and northern reaches of the county.

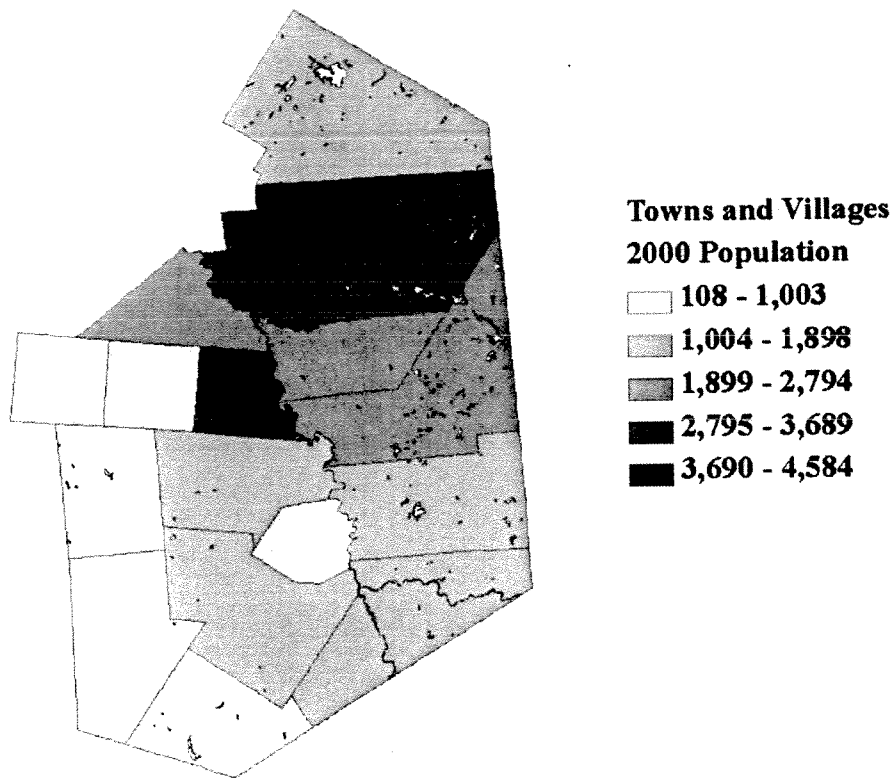


Figure 2. Population of Lewis County communities. Source: 2000 Census.

Socio-Economic Status

Lewis County Residential Income		
	Number	Percent
Households	11,078	100
Less than \$10,000	830	7.5
\$10,000-\$14,999	681	6.1
\$15,000-\$24,999	1,486	13.4
\$25,000-\$34,999	1,721	15.5
\$35,000-\$49,999	2,193	19.8
\$50,000-\$74,999	2,340	21.1
\$75,000-\$99,999	757	6.8
\$100,000-\$149,999	793	7.2
\$15,000-\$199,999	192	1.7
\$200,000 or more	85	0.77
Median Household Income	\$40,012	

*Table 3. Lewis County Household Income.
Source: American Community Survey 2005-2007*

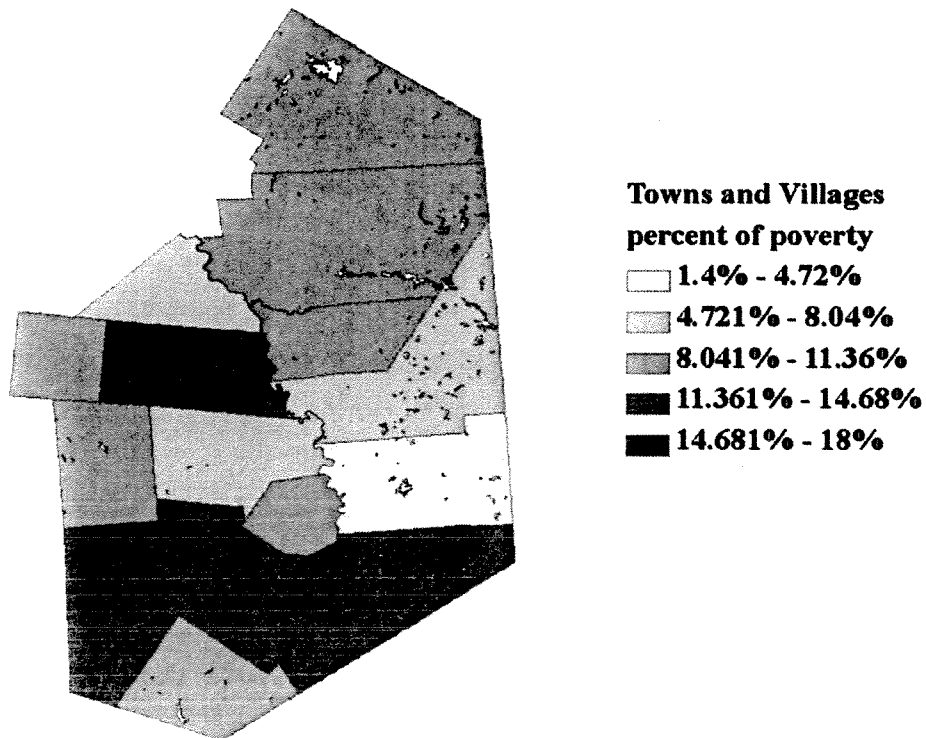


Figure 3. Geographic representation of poverty in Lewis County communities.

Lewis County Household Income						
	1990		2000		2007	
	Households	% Total	Households	% Total	Households	% Total
Under 25,000	6268	52%	4905	39%	2997	27%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	4087	34%	3820	31%	3914	35%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	1190	10%	2434	20%	2340	21%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	242	2.0%	839	6.7%	757	6.8%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	106	0.9%	315	2.5%	793	7.2%
Over \$150,000	69	0.6%	155	1.2%	277	2.5%
Total	11962	100%	12468	100%	11078	100%

*Table 4. Lewis County Household Income over 17-year period.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau*

Educational Status

Educational Institutions	
Public School Districts	Private Institutions
Adirondack Central School District Beaver River Central School District Copenhagen Central School District Harrisville Central School District Lowville Academy & Central School District South Lewis Central School District	Crystal Light Mennonite School River Valley Mennonite School Hope Mennonite School

Table 5. Public and private educational institutions in Lewis County.

Educational Attainment		
Population 25 years and older	17,684	100
Less than 9th grade	662	3.7
9th grade to 12th grade, no diploma	1,842	10.4
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	8,687	49.1
Some college, no degree	2,252	12.7
Associate degree	1,681	9.5
Bachelor's degree	1,444	8.2
Graduate or professional degree	1,116	6.3
Percent high school graduate or higher	86	
Percent bachelor's degree or higher	14.5	

*Table 6. Educational attainment statistics for Lewis County residents age 25 and older.
Source: American Community Survey 2005-2007*

Employment

Major industries providing employment to Lewis County residents are educational, health and social services (26.4%), manufacturing (12.4%), retail trade (10.7%), agriculture, forestry and fishing/hunting (9.6%) and construction (9.4%). Private wage and salary workers make up approximately 66% of the workforce, while 34% is divided between government workers and self-employed workers. The remaining 1% are unpaid family workers.

Industry		
	Number	Percent
Employed Civilian Population	11,985	100
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	1,146	10%
Construction	1,131	9.4%
Manufacturing	1,490	12%
Wholesale trade	171	1.4%
Retail trade	1,278	11%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	478	4.0%
Information	141	1.2%
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	328	2.7%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	645	5.4%
Educational, health and social services	3,164	26%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	669	5.6%
Other services (except public administration)	592	4.9%
Public administration	752	6.3%

Table 7. Industry breakdown of Lewis County Civilian Workforce.

Source: American Community Survey 2005-2007

Occupation		
	Number	Percent
Employed Civilian Population	11,985	100.0
Management, professional, and related occupations	3,837	32
Service occupations	2,066	17.2
Sales and office occupations	2,143	17.9
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	333	2.8
Construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations	1,718	14.3
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	1,888	15.8

Table 8. Occupational breakdown of Lewis County Civilian Workforce.

Source: American Community Survey 2005-2007

According to the 2000 Census, approximately 33% of employed Lewis County residents, over the age of 16, traveled outside of the county for employment. The average travel time for residents commuting to work was 23.5 minutes. The primary destinations were Watertown, Utica and Rome.

Vehicles

Approximately 5% of occupied housing units in Lewis County do not have access to a personal vehicle. Nearly 32% of those households have only one vehicle.

Vehicles Available		
	Number	Percent
Occupied Housing Units	11,078	100
None	532	4.8
1	3,492	31.5
2	4,944	44.6
3 or more	2,110	19

Table 9. Vehicles available per Lewis County household.

Source: American Community Survey 2005-2007

Methodology

Lewis County, with the support of the Lewis County Transportation Task Force, researched the transportation needs in the county. This research was divided into three separate categories:

- (1) Existing transportation services
- (2) Long-range transportation vision

The existing transportation services portion of the research is defined as identifying the existing transportation programs in the county, redundancies of services, gaps in services and potential needs. The long-range transportation vision involved research into what other rural counties, similar in geography and demographics, are doing with planning and implementing transportation systems. Knowing that a “one-size fits all” model does not work with transportation, Lewis County wanted to learn about successful programs in New York State.

Outreach

During the summer of 2008, the Lewis County Department of Economic Development and Planning met individually with administrators of transportation services from county human service departments to learn more about the services they provide, gaps in those services and future needs for the community. These one-on-one interviews brought forward information regarding funding sources, personnel needs, and administration costs. The following departments were interviewed:

- Office for the Aging
- Department of Social Services
- Lewis County Public Health
- Lewis County Community Mental Health
- Lewis County General Hospital Adult Day Health Care

In October 2008, the Lewis County Transportation Task Force sent a Transportation Services Surveys to various human services providers in the county, requesting detailed information regarding the needs of their clients, customers and employees. The following organizations were formally surveyed:

- Lewis County Office for the Aging
- Lewis County General Hospital Adult Day Health Care
- Lewis County Public Health
- Lewis County Department of Social Services
- Lewis County Mental Health
- Lewis County General Hospital Patient Care Services
- Lewis County Probation
- Lewis County Youth Bureau
- Lewis County Community Recovery Center
- Lewis County One-Stop Center for Employment and Training
- Northern Regional Center for Independent Living
- Mountain View Prevention Services
- Literacy of Northern New York
- Lewis County Opportunities
- Central New York DSO
- Valley View Courts
- Karcher Country Estates
- East Road Adult Home
- Options Unlimited Employment Services
- Lewis County Head Start
- Brookside Senior Living

Finally, as part of the long-range transportation vision, members of the Lewis County Transportation Task Force researched other rural transportation programs in similar size (area and population) in New York State. The Lewis County Department of Economic Development and Planning visited the Volunteer Transportation Center, Inc. in Watertown and conducted telephone interviews with the Essex County Transportation Department and Rural Transit Service, of Erie County. Additionally, a group of task force members visited the Schoharie County Public Transportation facility and the Allegany County Transportation Task Force to learn more about their respective programs.

Results from Research

The Lewis County Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan identifies the existing transportation services, redundancies within those services and gaps of those services. This information is outlined in the following sections.

Existing Public Transportation

Oneida County Rural Transit

315-336-3950 x 304

Oneida County Rural Transit operates a bus route starting in Lowville, at the Dollar General, with a stop in Port Leyden and continues into Oneida County to the Utica area. This route operates twice a week.

Existing Human Service Transportation

Lewis County Office for the Aging

5274 Outer Stowe Street

Lowville, NY 13367

315-376-5300

The Office for the Aging (OFA) offers transportation to seniors, age 60 and over, for the purposes of medical and dental visits and shopping for groceries and other essential needs. Transportation through this program is limited to the areas of Lowville, Watertown and Utica. The OFA utilizes the services of approximately 20 volunteer drivers who drive their own personal vehicles and are reimbursed at the federal rate of 0.585 cents/mile. The registrant contacts the OFA volunteer driver who is geographically closest to their home to make arrangements, and is asked to give the driver a couple of days notice for the services; however, the flexibility is at the discretion of the volunteer driver. Because the drivers are mainly seniors themselves, they are not required to assist the client to the door or help with any bags. Often, the driver, if he/she is capable, does assist the client if needed or requested. As of 2008, there are over 100 registrants in the program, but only 25-30 are active users of the program. During the period of September 2007 through September 2008, OFA has logged over 20,000 vehicle service miles for OFA clients. The OFA receives funding through the Older Americans Act Title IIIB and New York State Office for the Aging's Transportation Program.

Daily, OFA runs a 12-passenger van to pick-up/drop-off OFA registrants in the Lowville area for the meal site in Lowville. Drivers are paid staff and volunteers from the community. The agency also utilizes a driver provided through the Title V Senior Community Service Employment Program (a community service and work-based training program for older workers) when available. On average 16 to 20 people attend the Lowville Meal Site at Maple Ridge.

Lewis County Public Health Agency
7786 North State Street
Lowville, NY 13367
315-376-5636

Public Health contracts with Freeman Bus Service to provide pick-up/drop-off service to Lewis County children who are in the Pre-School and Early Intervention Programs. In order to qualify for the Pre-School Program, children must be between the ages of 3 and 5 and have a disability. The pre-school children are bussed to United Cerebral Palsy in Barneveld, Benchmark Family Services in Watertown and Jefferson Rehabilitation in Watertown.

The Early Intervention Program focuses on enhancing the development of infants and toddlers with diagnosed disabilities or developmental delays. Children between birth and the age of 3 qualify for this program. The children who participate in the Early Intervention Program children are transported to the United Methodist Church of Lowville.

Public Health funds the transportation program through funds received from the New York State Department of Health and Department of Education. Additionally, Public Health does reimburse Medicaid recipients. The 2007/2008 contract with Freeman states that the cost of a round-trip/child is \$55.93; however, as of August 1, 2008, the rate was increased to \$64.31/trip/child.

Lewis County General Hospital (LCGH)
7785 North State Street
Lowville, NY 13367
315-376-5499

The Adult Day Health Care (ADHC) program at LCGH offers transportation via door-to-door to and from the ADHC facility at LCGH. The transportation occurs in the morning and afternoon. The service is provided to approximately 20 people ages 18 and over with disabilities or other specific medical needs. There are two drivers, one full-time and one part-time and two vans that carry three wheelchair riders and 10 seated riders. The vans are owned by the hospital.

Additionally, the nursing home located at the hospital uses the vans for transportation of the nursing home residents to and from activities in the region. There are approximately 160 residents in the nursing home.

When the vans are not being used to transport for the ADHC facility and the nursing home, the vans are sometimes (twice weekly on average) used to transport those in the community without adequate transportation to and from medical appointments at the

hospital. This service is secondary to the ADHC and nursing home and those interested in using this service are required to make arrangements well in advance.

The budget for these programs in 2008 is \$33,000 for salaries and approximately \$6,000 for operating expenses.

Department of Social Services (DSS)
5274 Outer Stowe Street
Lowville, NY 13367
315-376-5703

The Department of Social Services prior approves and pays for transportation to necessary medical appointments for Medicaid recipients. DSS provides transportation mainly through volunteer drivers; however, DSS does contract with a provider for ambulette and ambulance service and provides one voucher for public transportation for a client living outside of Lewis County. Transportation funds may also be used to reimburse tolls, parking, meals and hotel costs in specific situations.

Volunteer drivers are reimbursed the federal rate to transport Medicaid recipients to and from essential medical appointments. For those Medicaid recipients who are able to transport themselves and have a financial hardship Medicaid reimburses them for the gas used to transport themselves to the appointment. The AAA gas rate (\$0.17/mile) is used in these circumstances.

The volunteer transportation is the largest and most complex Medicaid transportation in Lewis County. There are approximately 25 volunteers registered as drivers and sometimes a neighbor of a client is used to transport the individual to an appointment if requested. Transportation is provided in the "Common Medical Marketing Area" (Lowville and Watertown), although transportation is provided to larger metropolitan areas for those requiring more specialized treatment.

Lewis County also provides transportation for those involved in the Services Program areas of Child and Adult Protective, Child and Adult Preventive, PINS Diversion and Foster Care. DSS staff use county vehicles to transport children and/or parents for parental visitation and other reasons. Foster children are not to travel independently. Volunteer drivers are sometimes used for transportation of the parent and/or child. DSS has 11 vehicles for approximately 24 DSS staff to make home visits. The cars may be used to transport clients, but the primary focus of the transportation must fall under the reason DSS is involved with the client (Child Protective, Foster Care, Adult Protective, PINS, Fraud Investigation).

The Medicaid transportation budget for 2008 is \$750,000. Foster Care, Child Protective Services, and Protective Services for Adults, are reimbursed differently if using a volunteer. The county share in transportation for these programs is approximately \$4,500.

Lewis County Community Mental Health Center (LCCMHC)

7550 S. State Street

Lowville, NY 13367

Phone: 315-376-5450

Fax: 315-376-7221

Confidential Fax: 315-376-5501

Email: lewismh@lewiscountyny.org

Website: www.lewismh.org

Transportation as defined by the NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH): *The provision of transportation to and from facilities or resources specified in the Consumer's individual treatment plan as a necessary part of his/her service for mental disability. This includes all necessary supportive services for full and effective integration of the Consumer into community life.*

Lewis County Community Mental Health Center (LCCMHC) provides transportation to consumers in receipt of mental health services through various programs and/or services. Programs and/or services include, but are not limited to, case management, psychosocial club, family support services, clinic services, advocacy, child and family clinic plus (CFC+), and mentally ill / chemical abuser (MICA) services. LCCMHC's Transporter is a full-time employee who drives an agency van/vehicle to pick up, transport, and drop-off consumers for the purpose of accessing their essential needs (i.e. medical, dental, personal, etc.) as identified in individual treatment plans / service plans. Transportation is generally available Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., with scheduling preference given to those attending clinic appointments. This is a door-to-door service. The consumers of mental health services must call the transporter in advance to make arrangements for transportation. Case management staff, psychosocial club staff, and family support services staff also provide transportation as necessary by use of agency vehicles. Part-time family support services respite staff have traditionally used their own personal vehicles and are reimbursed for their mileage at the federal rate. Agency vehicles are now available for use by employees who provide part-time respite.

The 2008 estimated transportation costs for LCCMHC is \$50,000+. Funds are provided by Office of Mental Health (OMH) State aid. Operating costs are distributed to programs based on units of service. If any program exceeds State aid funding levels, LCCMHC typically uses OMH Federal Salary Sharing funds and transfers of State aid from other programs to cover the costs. Cost overruns become a county share. Currently, there are no county costs involved in the provision of LCCMHC transportation services. Per OMH General Provisions for State Aid Approval Letters guidelines, property (i.e. vehicles) purchased with OMH State aid funds shall be dedicated and used for benefiting the mental health programs that are funded through this State aid for the duration of that property's useful life.

The Arc, Oneida – Lewis Chapter, NYSARC

P.O. Box 126

Turin, New York 13473

315-348-5372

The Arc in Lewis County operates its own vehicles, contracts with independent drivers and reimburses their staff for personal vehicle use, in order to provide adequate transportation for its clients. Transportation is provided to places of employment in Lewis County and neighboring counties. A fare is charged to the customers/clients that utilize this transportation. The one vehicle that Arc owns seats eight, but is not handicapped accessible.

Lewis County Head Start

P.O. Box 206

Lowville, New York 13367

315-376-7531

Lewis County Head Start provides transportation services through arrangements with Beaver River Central School, Lowville Academy & Central School, Copenhagen Central School and South Lewis Central School Districts. Approximately 70 four-year-old children living on regular bus routes ride school buses with other students, often including their own brothers and sisters. LCHS reimburses staff for the use of their personal vehicles and reimburses parents for mileage to attend Head Start activities.

Head Start receives funding through the Department of Health and Human Services to operate the program.

Central New York DSO

7657 North State Street

Lowville, New York 13367

315-376-1700

The Central New York DSO offers assistance to disabled residents of Lewis County for the purposes of medical appointments and community outings (movies, shopping, visits to the zoo) throughout Lewis County and extends to surrounding counties and metropolitan areas. Transportation is provided through the operation of DSO owned vehicles; staff who use their personal cars for client transportation are reimbursed at the IRS rate of \$0.585/mile. Central New York DSO employs part-time drivers who are trained in passenger assistance techniques and First Aid/CPR. The two vehicles that Central New York DSO owns seat eight clients and are both handicapped accessible. Central New York DSO is a state funded government agency.

Lewis County Employment and Training

P.O. Box 193

Lowville, New York 13367

315-376-5800

The Lewis County Employment and Training office offers transportation of clients through volunteers using their personal vehicles and staff who are reimbursed for using their personal cars. Additionally, through federal funds, the office provides gas cards for those most in need and; the Lewis County Employment and Training office reimburses families for their mileage to and from their workplace at a rate of \$0.15/mile. The office utilizes 25 volunteer drivers, who are reimbursed at the federal rate.

Through Community Solutions for Transportation funding, the Lewis County Employment and Training office is able to assist individuals with transportation needs to places of employment and education in Lewis County and Jefferson County.

Lewis County Opportunities

8265 Route 812

Lowville, New York 13367

315-376-8202

Lewis County Opportunities is an organization dedicated to the fulfillment of unmet human needs within the community. They provide supportive programs for families and the community. Lewis County Opportunities owns multiple vehicles, although consumer transportation is reserved to the Domestic Violence-Rape Crisis (DV-RC) program using one minivan that seats up to seven people. None of the agency vehicles are handicapped accessible. Transportation for DV-RC consumers is provided by advocates to destinations including the Lewis County Courthouse, Lewis County General Hospital, law enforcement offices, and area shelters.

Lewis County Opportunities reimburses employees for the use of their personal vehicles as necessary when transporting consumer. The transportation offered through Lewis County Opportunities is funded through specific vehicle cost lines in grants such as Community Services Block Grant, VAWA, CVB, and HELP.

Brookside Senior Living Community

5701 Brookside Circle

Lowville, New York 13367

315-376-4333

Brookside Senior Living Community is a residence community for seniors in Lewis County. Through the operation of their own vehicles, Brookside provides transportation to its residents for the purposes of medical and dental appointments, grocery shopping and pharmacy. For a fee of \$.505/mile, Brookside provides transportation for residents to

Watertown. Brookside has a staff of part-time drivers who are trained in defensive driving, passenger assistance techniques and First Aid/CPR. From September 2007 to September 2008, Brookside provided a total of 1,800 one-way trips and traveled over 5,000 miles.

***Literacy of Northern New York
200 Washington Street, Suite 203
Watertown, New York 13601
315-376-8188***

The Literacy of Northern New York provides tutoring and training to Lewis and Jefferson County residents. While they do not receive any funding for transportation, they do reimburse staff for the use of their personal vehicles when a client is unable to get transportation to the tutoring site. Transportation to the Literacy of Northern New York office and to area libraries is the most common transportation destination. Because there is no funding for the transportation of clients, Literacy of Northern New York has relied on non-reimbursed volunteer drivers and on occasion, utilized the services of the Jefferson County Volunteer Transportation Center.

***Mountain View Prevention Services
7714 Number Three Road
Lowville, New York 13367
315-376-2321***

Mountain View Prevention Services is non-profit, private agency dedicated to the prevention of alcohol and substance abuse. They do not provide transportation, but sometimes drive to client's homes for consultations because the client is unable to secure transportation. They have also assisted clients in securing transportation, as needed.

***Castorland Housing Development Fund Company, Inc.
Karcher Country Estates
4892 State Route 410
Castorland, New York 13620***

Karcher Country Estates is a residential community in Lewis County and while they receive no funding for transportation, non-reimbursed volunteer drivers transport residents to and from medical appointments and grocery stores.

Northern Regional Center for Independent Living (NRCIL)
7632 North State Street
Lowville, NY 13367
315-376-8696
www.nrcil.net

Northern Regional Center for Independent Living is a disability rights and resource center that promotes community efforts to end discrimination, segregation, and prejudice against people with disabilities. NRCIL works with community partners to create an accessible, inclusive society. Through NRCIL, people discover choices to live more independently, with enhanced dignity.

NRCIL serves people with disabilities and their families in Jefferson and Lewis counties. NRCIL serves people of all ages and disabilities. We also work with public officials, service providers and businesses that require technical assistance in responding to the needs of persons with disabilities. Services to individuals and families are provided free of charge.

NRCIL does not provide transportation, but does make home visits to consumers that are unable to secure transportation. We assist individuals to find transportation and access all community supports.

Redundancies in Services

It is clear that there are redundancies in the existing human services transportation system. Currently, there is no coordination of Medicaid transportation for the different agencies that offer Medicaid assistance. The Office for the Aging, Department of Social Services and Community Mental Health Center provide transportation for Medicaid recipients and each administers the programs within their individual departments. Because each of the departments administers Medicaid transportation separately, the total administrative costs are high. Multiple departments are not only providing similar volunteer transportation services to the public, but the administrations of these services are duplicated as well.

Currently, there is a local bus contractor who provides transportation for The Arc, Oneida-Lewis Chapter to and from Utica, NY. Utica is the destination of a portion of Medicaid clients transported by volunteer drivers or case managers in Lewis County departments. The existing public transportation system from Lewis County to Utica is not well marketed and most people do not know that the service exists. Because most departments, service organizations and Lewis County residents are unfamiliar with this service, there are redundancies in transportation efforts to Utica.

Unmet Needs

Through discussions with human service providers, the Lewis County Transportation Task Force has identified gaps in the current services: low-income individuals and senior citizens.

There are low-income people within the county who do not qualify for services provided through the departments outlined in previous sections. This population finds it difficult to afford, operate and/or maintain a vehicle. As seen in Table 7, approximately 5% of the county households do not own a vehicle. Through meetings with service organizations in Lewis County and Transportation Services Survey results, lack of transportation was identified as a major concern. Organizations that offer human services, such as, counseling, training or tutoring, have reported difficulty in providing these services to the public, because the client does not have adequate transportation to get them to and/or from the service.

There is also a lack of senior mobility within the community. The Office for the Aging does provide transportation to individuals; however, it is limited by the proximity of volunteer drivers to the client and the transportation budget. Seniors in Lewis County are interested in transportation to shopping centers, medical clinics, banks and post offices, hair salons and community centers. Additionally, the Office for the Aging meal sites are well attended, but it is believed that there are seniors in the community who are unable to attend these sites because of the lack of transportation.

The existing transportation services do not provide transportation to the general public, except for the Birnie Bus Service to Utica. Only those who qualify for and are registered to receive transportation through the county human service departments are benefiting

from existing transportation services. There may be a need for transportation for the general public for the purposes of shopping, medical, dental and employment.

Additionally, the Community Mental Health Center and Lewis County General Hospital are both extending transportation beyond the original scope of their individual services by providing transportation to clients for essential needs purposes and medical appointments, respectively. While these services are necessary, they can be a financial burden to these departments and their transportation budgets.

Lewis County Transportation Goals

To help Lewis County residents remain independent and self-sufficient by offering greater access to transportation services for all people.

In support of the overall desired mission, the Lewis County Transportation Task Force has identified three supporting goals in which they plan to focus their primary efforts.

1. Reduce the cost of providing trips to clients and customers.
2. Increase the efficiency and productivity of transportation services in Lewis County.
3. Increase the overall mobility of residents within the county.

Goal 1: Reduce the cost of providing trips to clients and customers.

Outcome Measure:

Lower the cost of providing trips for the Department of Social Services, Lewis County Public Health Agency, Lewis County Community Mental Health Center, Lewis County General Hospital and Office for the Aging.

Goal 2: Increase the efficiency and productivity of transportation services in Lewis County.

Outcome Measure:

Increase the number of riders for the same or fewer assets for people with disabilities, older adults, children and youth and low-income individuals.

Goal 3: Increase mobility within the community.

Outcome Measure:

Increase the number of public transit riders throughout the county.

Action Plan

Recommended Actions

The Lewis County Transportation Task Force has focused their discussions on the transportation needs for all county residents, especially the needs of the disabled, senior, children and youth and low-income individuals. Lewis County officials and human service providers have been discussing the need for coordinated transportation and the additional need of public transit for several years. In order for Lewis County to coordinate human services transportation and meet the stated goals, there must be a central mobility manager. A central mobility manager is the person charged with administering and operating the transportation program. The LCTTF identified the following options:

1. Develop a Lewis County Transportation facility, funded and staffed by the county.
2. House the human services transportation mobility manager and administration of the program within one of the private, non-profit organizations within the county.
3. Contract the human services transportation program with an existing local public transit provider that will serve as the central mobility manager.

The most recent efforts by the LCTTF have concluded the need for public transportation, with the inclusion of coordinated human service transportation. It is recommended that the human services transportation, in cooperation with the formation of countywide public transit, be contracted out to a local public transit provider.

Implementation

Lewis County will contract with a local transit service to provide transportation to residents of the county. DSS, OFA, CMHC, LCGH ADHC, and PHA will coordinate with the transit service to provide safe and accessible service to the clients and customers of the agencies. Each of the agencies listed above have been actively involved as members of the LCTTF and are willing participants of coordinated human service-public transit.

The LCTTF has identified implementation needs. Some of these needs are currently being met, as stated in other areas of the Plan, while others will need to be focused on as the county moves toward implementation of the coordinated public transit-human services transportation system. The needs identified are:

Identified Needs	Status
Public Involvement	In Progress
Reduction of duplication of effort among county departments	In Progress
Coordination among individuals and agencies committed to transportation coordination	In Progress
Ensure participating agencies are fully vested in the success of the program	In Progress
Establish a system that is easy to administer	Planned
Build trust among task force members and reach consensus	Met
Look for alternatives to overcome potential roadblocks	In Progress
Generate support from local officials	In Progress
Market coordinated system to clients and customers	Planned
Educate human service providers on coordinated transportation	In Progress
Educate existing customers/clients on coordinated transportation	Planned
Maintain effective volunteer network	Met

Table 10. Transportation needs of Lewis County and status of progress.

Specifically, human service agencies are being asked to encourage ridership on the existing public transit route to Utica. All clients and customers who typically utilize volunteer drivers for trips to Utica are being encouraged to ride the existing bus route to Oneida County.

Survey results have detailed the need to educate human service providers on the transition from the existing transportation system to a coordinated public and human service transportation system. The LCTTF has recognized this need and is developing a plan to educate human service providers on this transition.

In addition to educating human service providers, the Transportation Services Survey revealed the need to educate the existing and potential customers and clients. The LCTTF is discussing a marketing plan for the planned coordinated public transit-human services transportation system.

The formation of specific transit routes will be organized based on results from surveys completed by county human service organizations. These surveys gathered information on specific destinations and other needs of clients and customers of the human service organizations.

Finally, future development and/or expansion of transit service will consider regional relationships. Lewis County will work with neighboring counties and their existing public transit service when planning transportation efforts. The contiguous transit services are:

Jefferson County
Volunteer Transportation Center, Inc.
203 North Hamilton Street
Watertown, NY 13601
(315) 788-0422
<http://www.volunteertransportationcenter.org/>

The Volunteer Transportation Center (VTC) provides transportation to residents of Jefferson County who have no other way of getting to medical appointments, pharmacies, therapies or groceries. The VTC operates four programs: Senior Transportation Program, Project Wings (in conjunction with Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired), Persons with Disabilities and Other Transportation Programs.

Transportation is available for medical appointments, groceries, support groups, attendance at community functions, etc. The VTC does not charge clients for these services, but do ask clients to make a donation.

Oswego County
Oswego County Opportunities
239 Oneida Street
Fulton, New York 13069
1-877-484-3287
www.oco.org

Oswego County Public Transit offers fixed routes, demand response, Call-n-Ride and Retired Individuals Driving the Elderly Service. There are 12 fixed routes throughout the county. The fare for public transit is \$1.50 per one-way trip. Seniors have a reduced rate of \$0.75 per one-way trip, but must show their Medicare card and photo identification. Children ages 6-9 are charged \$0.75 per one-way trip and children ages 5 and under ride for free when accompanied by an adult.

St. Lawrence County
315-393-5200
www.commuterbusinfo.com

St. Lawrence County public transportation is contracted with Roethel Coach Lines, Inc. Three bus routes are offered throughout the county and shuttle services are offered in the Ogdensburg and Potsdam areas. There is no charge for children under the age of three and all other fares are \$1.50 per one-way trip.

Oneida County Rural Transit

Watertown CitiBus

544 Newell Street

Watertown, NY 13601

(315) 785-7772

www.watertown-ny.gov/

CitiBus offers transportation with five daily routes throughout the City of Watertown. The service operates Monday through Saturday from 7:00 am to 6:15 pm. The base fare is \$1 per person and children under 12, students (with student ID), senior citizens and disabled individuals receive a reduced rate. A paratransit bus is available for those passengers who are not able to ride the regular buses.

Conclusions

Coordinating human service transportation with public transit provide the following benefits:

- Outreach to all members of the public, especially those who may not qualify for assistance through existing human service programs.
- Unification of all members of the public, including disabled, senior, children and low-income individuals.
- Support the self-sufficiency and independence of all residents of the county.
- Utilize existing transportation funds for the most effective and efficient human services transportation.

The county human service providers and other agencies have recognized the need for coordinating transportation efforts for several years. This plan outlines the redundancies and unmet needs of transportation in the county and details an action plan to coordinate the existing efforts with the inclusion of those individuals who have gone underserved. Coordinated public transit and human service transportation will make the existing programs more efficient, reduce overall transportation costs, and will foster additional mobility within the county and region by providing service to individuals who have not benefited from transportation service in the past.

Lewis County Transportation Task Force Members	
Name	Organization
David Bush	Lewis County Office for the Aging
Brenda Bourgeois	Lewis County Community Mental Health Clinic
Karen Boliver	Northern Regional Center for Independent Living (NRCIL)
Preston Brower	Community-at-large
Sarah Bullock	Lewis County Department of Economic Development & Planning
Fidel Garza	CNY Developmental Disabilities Service Offices
Elon Grunert	Lewis County Public Health
Jenny Jones	Lewis County Department of Social Services
Aldea LaParr	NRCIL
Scott Mathys	Lewis County Opportunities
David Pendergast	Lewis County Manager
Sandra Roberts	Lewis County Head Start
Deborah Tate	Literacy of Northern NY
John Waterhouse	Mountain View Prevention Services/Volunteer Transportation Center, Inc.